

Gospel Truth

Biblical Instruction and Encouragement for the Mission Field Worldwide.

CALLED OUT OF DARKNESS

But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. —1 Peter 2:9

The message echoing down through the ages of time from the throne of God is still applicable and resonates in this generation. It is the divine call of God to leave the darkness of this sinful world and to walk in the marvelous light of truth and righteousness. People’s lives are consumed with the lusts of the flesh: adultery, fornication, homosexuality, uncleanness, idolatry, hatred, competition, strife, envy, murder, drunkenness, partying, and the list goes on. Spiritual darkness is spreading across the land as God is rejected and people follow their own lustful designs. Let it be firmly established in every heart and mind that “They which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (Galatians 5:19-21).

People are trying to subdue the inner voice of the convicting Spirit of God to escape guilt and condemnation, as they pursue that which is immoral and wrong through the temporary pleasures of the flesh. While many are rejecting even the existence of God and denying an absolute morality, religions of man are trying to repackage and redefine the gospel to allow room for sin and to accommodate the evil that exists in the hearts of mankind. Truly, men love darkness

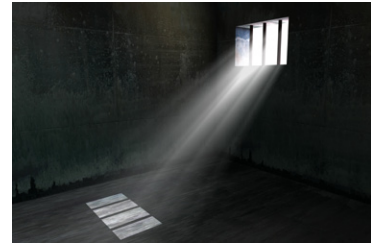
rather than light because their deeds are evil (John 3:19).

Addictions and vices of the flesh are rampant in society, and the moral fabric is being torn asunder as the darkness deepens. While some people stand against the immorality of the times, they themselves are too often driven by the lust of ambition, pride, or wealth. Spiritual darkness in all forms separates people from God, and the wages of sin is death.

Darkness is the absence of light. Spiritually, it is the force of all that is contrary to God which permeates to the inner being of man; it affects him physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. The works of the flesh and the darkness of sin, propagated by politicians and glamorized though the media and by the entertainment and sports worlds, are wreaking havoc in personal lives and families. The sinful lifestyles and ideologies of the world are not bringing greater happiness, peace, or satisfaction to people; rather, they bring despair, loneliness, hopelessness, and ultimately death, as the soul of man cries out for something to satiate the longing within.

Thank God, there is deliverance from sin and darkness through the power of Jesus Christ. “If we walk in the light, as he is in the light...the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from

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“Darkness is the absence of light. Spiritually, it is the force of all that is contrary to God.”

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WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES ABOUT...

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2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21; Matt. 24:35

Relationship of Love

Matt. 22:37-40; John 14:21-23; 1 John 4:7-11

Repentance

Acts 3:19; Acts 17:30; 2 Cor. 7:10

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John 3:3-7; 2 Cor. 5:17; Rom. 6:1-4;
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1 John 5:18; Matt. 1:21; John 8:11

Infilling of the Holy Spirit

Acts 19:2; Acts 15:8-9; Acts 1:8

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Luke 1:73-75; Heb. 12:14; 1 Peter 1:15-16;
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Luke 17:20-21; Romans 14:17; John 18:36

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John 17:20-23; Gal 3:28; Rev. 18:2-4

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Matt. 28:19-20; Matt. 26:26-30;
1 Cor. 11:23-27; John 13:14-17

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Luke 4:18; Isaiah 53:4-5; James 5:13-16

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Matt. 19:5-6; Luke 16:18; Rom. 7:2-3;
1 Cor. 7:10-11

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1 Tim. 2:9-10; 1 Cor. 11:14-15; Deut. 22:5

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2 Peter 3:7-12; John 5:28-29; 2 Cor. 5:10;
Matt 25:31-46

Pacifism

Luke 6:27-29; Luke 18:20

Worship

John 4:23-24; Eph. 5:19; 2 Cor. 3:17

Great Commission

Mark 16:15

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all sin" (1 John 1:7). The call is to come out of darkness into His wonderful light. It is light that dispels darkness, and the light of Jesus Christ will drive the power of sin from the soul. All people have walked in darkness and were under the power of the flesh, but those that heed the call of God find



**"It is a lie of Satan to
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the beauty of light and peace. "Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12).

Jesus came that "whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness" (John 12:46). It is a lie of Satan to cause people to think they can choose some darkness and some light. The children of God are called out of darkness and are to walk as children of light, proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. Not only are they to disfellowship the unfruitful works of darkness, but they are also to reprove them (Ephesians 5:8-11).

When one accepts Christ with the whole heart and repents of sin, the light of Christ will transform the life. 2 Corinthians 5:17 is still true: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." There will be no more lying, cheating, fornicating, adultery, hatred or any such thing. The light of Christ will bring the grace and fruit of the Spirit in love, peace, goodness, etc. (Galatians 5:22-25); and the individual will no more walk after the flesh but after the spirit. As pilgrims and strangers, children of God will "abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (1 Peter 2:11) and will be separate from the world and part of the holy nation.

The light of God brings healing, restoration, and peace, but there must be a clean and clear break from the darkness. "This then is the message which we have heard of him...that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth" (1 John 1:5-6). We cannot please God and be carnally minded, walking after the flesh (Romans 8:5-8).

If you are living in darkness, open your heart to the light of God and enjoy the true blessings of life. ■

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—Editor, Michael Smith

Gospel Truth, P.O. Box 2042, Nixa, MO 65714 USA
editor@thegospeltruth.org

Editorial



O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the LORD. —Isaiah 2:5

As the world grows darker and darker in sin, the distinction between society and God’s people should grow greater and greater. The light of truth from God’s people will shine brighter and brighter as wickedness abounds. As the prophet Isaiah entreated God’s people of old, I entreat you: “Come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord.”

The subject of the Gospel Truth this quarter is “Not of This World.” There is no ambiguity in the scripture concerning the necessity of God’s people forsaking the world and following Jesus in holiness. Holiness is a fundamental theme of both the old and new covenants, yet the religious leaders of our time are eradicating the principles of holiness from their preaching and are teaching a social, feel-good gospel. Too many people, even claiming to be Church of God, are living worldly lives. While not popular, the truth remains that holiness is much more than personal preference; it is an absolute necessity if we want to please God and make Heaven our home.

Saints are to represent holiness in every facet of life as good ambassadors of Jesus Christ. True holiness is much more than an outward act; it is inward pureness that comes from the presence of the Holy Spirit abiding in the heart. True devotion to God will cause people to turn away from the things and spirit of this world. Holiness is indeed an issue of the heart.

I yearn to see more souls saved and turned to the Lord; but my spirit is also very burdened at the lackadaisical, casual attitude many professing Christians have toward the detrimental practices and influences of the world. Friend, living for God still means that we turn our back on the world and live out the song: “I have left all the world to follow Jesus.”

Many young people are making life choices in careers, education, marriage, dress, etc. based upon the values and ambitions of the world. All the wealth and prestige of this world mean nothing to a holy God, and they will not bring happiness in this life nor in the life to come. Let us invest ourselves in spiritual things and follow after that which is good and profitable for the spiritual wellbeing of ourselves and those around us.

God’s true people have always been few, and it is no different in this generation. When we live a holy life, we will act, talk, and dress differently than the world. The things we involve ourselves in should be pleasing to our Holy Father, and we should reflect His righteousness. Many are not willing to accept this truth without reservation. Our lives should not be measured by the standard of the world but by the clear standard of holiness in God’s Word.

Child of God, we cannot afford to be conformed to this world. Let us embrace holiness and consecrate our lives completely to God. Let us lay aside the sinful things and ideologies of this world and separate ourselves from the influences that produce worldliness. Let us be heavenly-minded and glorify God in holiness.

Michael W. Smith

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TRUE DEVOTION TO GOD WILL CAUSE PEOPLE TO TURN
AWAY FROM THE THINGS AND SPIRIT OF THIS WORLD.
HOLINESS IS INDEED AN ISSUE OF THE HEART.

Bible Study Guide

Subject: Not of the World

Scripture Reading: *I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.* —John 17:14-16

Summary: Christians are called out of darkness and out of the world to live holy lives, walking in the light of Christ. They are to remain aloof from the influences of the world and are to daily live to glorify God in all things.



I. Called Out of Darkness

- A. 1 Peter 2:9-11 Called out of darkness.
- B. Galatians 5:16-25 People who commit the works of the flesh will not go to Heaven.
- C. John 3:19 Men love darkness rather than light.
- D. 1 John 1:5-7 Cannot fellowship God and walk in darkness. The blood of Jesus cleanses from all sin.
- E. John 8:12 Followers of Christ shall not walk in darkness.
- F. John 12:46 Believers abide not in darkness.
- G. Ephesians 5:8-11 Reprove the works of darkness.
- H. 2 Corinthians 5:17 In Christ, old things are passed away.
- I. Romans 8:5-8 To be carnally minded is death.

II. Not of the World

- A. John 17:14-16 Disciples of Christ are not of the world.
- B. John 15:18-19 Chosen you out of the world. World will hate you.
- C. 1 John 3:1 The world knoweth us not.

III. Love Not the World

- A. 1 John 2:15 Love not the world.
- B. 1 John 2:16 Lust is not of the Father.
- C. Colossians 3:1-2 Set your affection on things above.

IV. Power of the World

- A. 2 Corinthians 4:4 God of this world hath blinded the minds.
- B. Colossians 2:8 Spoiled through philosophy and vain deceit.

V. Wisdom of the World

- A. 1 Corinthians 3:18-19 Wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.
- B. 1 Corinthians 1:18-25 The foolishness of God is wiser than men.

VI. Cautions

- A. 2 Timothy 2:4 Do not entangle with the affairs of this life.
- B. Romans 12:1-2 Be not conformed to this world.
- C. James 4:4 A friend of the world is the enemy of God.
- D. James 1:27 Keep unspotted from the world.

VII. Consequences

- A. Matthew 16:24-26 What is profited to gain the whole world and lose the soul?
- B. Galatians 6:7-8 Man will reap eternally what is sown.

VIII. Called to Holiness

- A. 1 Peter 1:15-16 Be ye holy for God is holy.
- B. 1 Corinthians 6:18-20 Glorify God in body and spirit.
- C. Hebrews 12:14 Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord.

Conclusion

Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness. —2 Peter 3:11

Not of This WORLD

True followers of Christ have been and forever will be separate and distinct from the world in morality, purpose, conduct, spirit, dress, and lifestyle. Professing Christians who are one with the world violate the very principles of the One whom they claim to worship and serve.



While the chapels may be filled with lovers of the world who claim to be lovers of God, the divine Church of God is composed of those who are sold out for God and devoted to Christ and His cause above all else. As spiritual pilgrims on earth, God's children still need jobs to work, schools to attend, houses in which to live, and money with which to buy things. However, they seek not the earthly treasures of this world but seek rather to please God daily with their affections, time, energy, and earthly possessions.

In the World but Not of It

A profound truth of living for God is contained in the prayer of Christ for His disciples: "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (John 17:15-16). It was never God's intent for people to physically withdraw themselves from society and establish villages and communes for the saints. Rather, Jesus desires for His children to go into all the world and let the light of truth shine brightly as they live distinct, holy lives free from the evil and influences that exist around them.

Definition of World

It is vital to understand the call and requirement to be separate from the world. The term "world" is used in various ways in the scripture. The world can refer to the physical universe that God created; it can refer to people in general, such as "For God so loved the world"; and it can refer

to the rules, principles, values, and affections by which unredeemed people are governed and the objects of this life after which they seek. It is this latter definition that Christ invokes when He declares that His disciples are "not of this world." People who are living and walking after the values of this world are not disciples of Christ, for Christians indeed are not of this world.

Hated by the World

Jesus stated without qualification that society in general would hate His disciples because they are not of the world. "I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (John 15:18-19). The people of the world love their own but dislike the dictates of holiness and godly living. Therefore, if someone is loved by the world, according to scripture, he is one with it and not living the called-out life of a saint. Disciples of Christ walk in the law of holiness which is very dissimilar to the spirit and interests of carnal, unsaved people. "Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not" (1 John 3:1).

Love Not the World

In spite of attempts to undermine true holiness by mixing and mingling principles of Christ with values of the world, the scriptural requirements and instructions are clear: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15). Christians must set their affection exclusively on God and never be governed by the things or unrighteous spirit of the world. The child of God must remain aloof from the influences of the world and abstain from the sinful, prideful, lustful, pleasure, honor-seeking passions and appetites. Love for the

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world and love for God are incompatible and cannot coexist.

“For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world” (1 John 2:16). The scripture gives great clarity in those things that are of the world and not of the Father. The lust of the flesh is the desire for fleshly pleasures that are sensual and impure; including but not limited to drugs, alcohol, gluttony, fornication, etc. The world is rampant with immodesty. Wearing tight and/or revealing clothing in public is of the world and contrary to what the Bible teaches about modesty and simplicity. Makeup and jewelry are after the spirit of worldliness and facilitate lust of the eyes—that which gratifies the sight. Inordinate desire for finery, gaudy clothing, expensive and showy houses and cars is vain and not of the Father. The pride of life includes the spirit of ambition that seeks for honor and recognition of man. It is the desire for the accolades and grandness of the wealth and riches of this world.

These lusts and objects of worldly desire are not compatible with walking with God in humility and love. If one’s personality draws strongly toward these things, there is grace to overcome it to live pleasing to Christ. “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth” (Colossians 3:1-2).

Power & Wisdom of the World

2 Corinthians 4:4 teaches that the “god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not.” There is great power and force in the things and spirits of the world. Many children of God have been overcome by dabbling with the things of the world and have lost their love for God. Sports, music, entertainment, and fashion are just a few of the gods of this world that people worship as modern-day idols, for they control people’s affections, time, and money. The greatest power of the world is not even in the things but in its philosophies and ideologies. “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ” (Colossians 2:8).

Children of God must be watchful, or they will slowly but surely be swayed in their thinking away from the practical holiness of daily living. They can be robbed by listening to the rationale of carnal, ungodly people. The unredeemed teachers and instructors of our

time claim a higher degree of knowledge and understanding and purport superior intellect and enlightenment by trivializing godliness and propagating a mindset of openness and inclusion to things clearly contrary to godliness.

The apostle Paul wrote to the church at Corinth warning them in 1 Corinthians 3:19: “The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.” The preaching of the cross is foolish to the world, but it is the power of God; and the “foolishness of God is wiser than men.” (1 Corinthians 1:18-25). To whom are you listening for instruction and guidance? There is a clear agenda in society to draw people away from holiness. Beware, child of God!

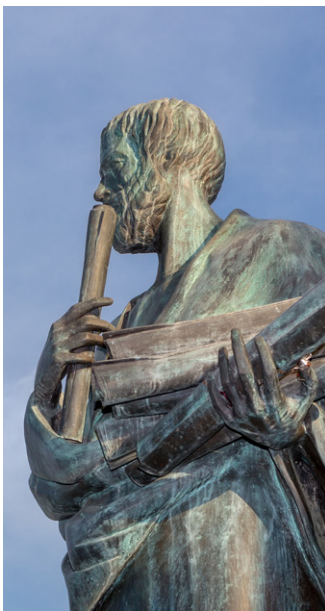
Cautions

There should be a great caution while living in the world not to be of it. “No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life” (2 Timothy 2:4). This includes the politics and causes of society. Very quickly a carnal spirit can take root in a “good cause” and violate the spirit and attitude that was once sanctified to God.

The church at Rome was challenged, as should be the church today, to present themselves fully to God and to “be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Romans 12:1-2). More minds need to be transformed because there are too many Christians conforming to the world in purpose, spirit, and appearance; it is not acceptable to God. Powerful and true, James 4:4 reads: “Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.” Regardless of the teaching of many compromised, religious leaders, pure religion is to keep “unspotted from the world” (James 1:27).

May the eyes of the spiritually blind be opened to the danger of the world so they may see the beauty of holiness. Dear reader, examine your life by the Word of God. Are your robes spotted with the world or can you with clearness of conscience before God say, “I am not of this world even as Christ was not of this world”? Are you willing to be different from the world, your family, and friends and to take your stand with Jesus? What will it profit you if you gain the whole world and yet lose your soul? (Matthew 16:24-26).

This world will soon pass away, and those that have followed it will suffer everlasting death and punishment; but eternal life awaits the child of God who is “not of this world” through Christ. ■



“The greatest power of the world is not even in the things but in its philosophies and ideologies.”



Living for the Lord in holiness is the most fulfilling way to live life. Satisfying the commission and design of our Creator brings the greatest joy and enables individual potential to be maximized. While there are many roads to travel, only one leads to eternal life. Yes, it is a narrow way and few there be that find it, but it is a good way. Walking on the highway of holiness brings true rest and peace to the spirit, for it is in the presence of the Lord that one finds true satisfaction. We can only find the Lord in a life of holiness, for He is a holy God. Many seek to find God by mingling the spirit of the world with good principles of living. This is exemplified by much of the “religious” music and worship of the world that use godly words coupled with music of the world to pull on the emotions. True, lasting fellowship with God is not found in this mix but in purity and holiness.

From the beginning, God’s purpose was to have a people that were separate and holy, dedicated to worshiping Him. The essence of Christ’s teaching was centered in holiness. He instructed His disciples how to reflect the glory of God to a lost world.

“As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:15-16). We are called to an experience and life of holiness, for without it we cannot live in a state of reconciliation with God. True holiness, which comes from the presence of Christ, enables and empowers us to walk pleasing to the Lord. We are to live holy in every

area of life. Holy not only denotes “sanctified” but “the same throughout.” The life of a Christian is to be thoroughly of the same spirit and purpose inwardly and outwardly.

1 Corinthians 6:20 states: “For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.” Glorifying God is the umbrella which covers all areas of life: from what motivates our decisions, to the words we speak, to the attitudes we carry, to the way we dress outwardly. Children of God are called to glorify God in every way, every day.

The enemy will try to portray holiness as living in a straitjacket. “You can’t do this, you can’t do that. You can’t go there, you can’t listen to that,” etc. The enemy is a liar. Holiness is liberating, not confining. Holiness through Christ enables the Christian to be free from the powers of this world that are driving and controlling people. True salvation and holiness deliver us from fear and torment. It brings, as one song says, “freedom from hatred, envy, and strife.” Holiness is more about what we can do in Christ than what we can not do in the world.

Living a holy life is a high calling, and it rises far above the way most people are living around us. It takes courage and boldness to respond to the call to be separate, but the rewards are eternal. It is vital to answer the call to holiness, for without it “no man shall see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14). ■

“The life of a Christian is to be thoroughly of the same spirit and purpose inwardly and outwardly.”

“FOR GOD HATH NOT CALLED US UNTO UNCLEANNESS, BUT UNTO HOLINESS.”

1 THESSALONIANS 4:7



DID YOU KNOW?

From the writings of Tertullian circa 210 AD: “So long as you deem yourself a Christian, you are a different man from a pagan. Give him back his own views of things! After all, he does not himself learn from your views. Why lean upon a blind guide if you have eyes of your own? Why be clothed by one who is naked if you have put on Christ?”

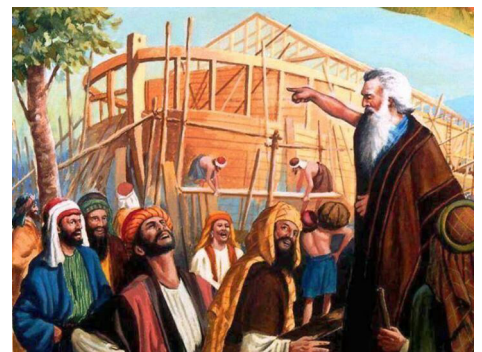


A Word
in Season

A PREACHER OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

And [God] spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly. —2 Peter 2:5

In obedience to divine instruction from God, Noah faithfully labored for decades to build an ark. This ark was a means of deliverance from the flood that would destroy the wicked in God’s judgment. Despite being scoffed at and ridiculed, Noah steadfastly maintained integrity with God and did not yield to the pressures of society. He stood alone, believing God’s word was truth. He “prepared an ark to the saving of his house...and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith” (Hebrews 11:7).



Genesis 6:9 informs us that “Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God.” Evidently, Noah did not keep his faith to himself but was a preacher of righteousness. He proclaimed truth and righteousness by his actions and by his mouth. How much easier it would have been to quietly go about his business, but Noah saw the wickedness of mankind and preached righteousness to the people in order to give them opportunity to humble and repent of their sins before the judgment of God was unleashed.

There is a great need for more preachers of righteousness in our present, wicked generation. Too many preachers are preaching that which makes people feel good about themselves, even in their sin. They teach those things that are easy to hear and digest. God is holy, and His ministers are to be preachers of holiness and of separation from the evil and spirit of the world. The preacher of holiness may be ridiculed, mocked, and persecuted. There will be people that leave the congregation offended. However, it is better for people to be offended in this life with opportunity to repent rather than to be eternally offended at the judgment without opportunity for redemption.

As in the days of Noah, so it will be in that final day of judgment. The holy will be saved, and the wicked will be cut off forever in eternal death. May God give all the ministers Holy Spirit boldness to proclaim the whole truth of holiness without reservation, for it is to the saving of the soul. ■

Contact

The Gospel Truth
P. O. Box 2042
Nixa, MO 65714
USA

Email:
editor@thegospeltruth.org

HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD